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**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD  
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

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Landmark/District:	<b>Anacostia Historic District</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	<b>1108-1110 Good Hope Road, SE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	<b>September 22, 2011</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
Case Number:	<b>11-468</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Addition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Staff Reviewer:	<b>Tim Dennée</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept

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The applicant, Darrel Rippeteau, agent and architect for property owner Sigma Investments LLC, requests the Board's approval of a largely after-the-fact permit to revise a previously approved storefront design. The alteration is part of a larger remodeling and combination of three properties occupied by Environmental Design & Construction, the project's builder.

The design approved in 2009 (attached) was conceived as a tripartite organization of fixed, wood, heavily glazed, door-like units installed under a fairly traditional clerestory level. The whole composition was to be surmounted by a storefront cornice which is proportionally heavy, probably too much so. The thinking behind the design was that these buildings had once been used for quasi-industrial uses such as grain, feed and fertilizer storage and sale, and the units could be more door-like rather than like a typical retail display window.

Once under construction, the storefront strayed markedly from the approved design, prompting a complaint and a stop-work order. While the as-built condition schematically followed the pattern of verticals and horizontals depicted in the approved drawings, the materials and dimensions and overall feeling are very different. Gone is the concept of units installed between posts, the distinction between the clerestory and the rest, and the texture and detail provided by the use wood and the variation of plane between the posts, the window framing members and the glazing. Lacking the proposed materials and the heft of the "door" units, the cornice looks relatively even heavier and out of place.

The stated rationale for the change is that the building was revealed to lack the proper steel beam or lintel over the storefront opening, so the storefront framing became structural. Unfortunately, this does not nearly account for the deviation, as there were other ways to support the wall above as well as other ways to design a storefront that incorporates structural columns. In addition, the owners have shown an interest in creating a front of high-security glass and steel that can withstand unusually great impacts. The result is a storefront that is characterless and forbidding, one that neither evokes the warehouse-door notion nor a traditional display window.

The challenge is that this could not be easily remedied by merely applying trim to the steel and hoping that it would both stay in place and look convincing as a storefront.

To ameliorate the problem, the applicant proposes to add steel panels to the lower portion of the window to provide something of a traditional base. To the face of the steel framing itself, the applicant would add two parallel steel angles along the length of each member to suggest a mold profile. The sets of drawings suggest that the storefront would be painted in at least two contrasting Victorian earth tones to heighten the effect and suggest a hierarchy among the thicker and thinner steel members.

### **Evaluation**

The deviation from the approved plans is inexplicable, and neither the as-built condition nor the plans now proposed would have been administratively approved or supported by the HPO if the plans had been presented prior to work commencing. The Board and staff have to be careful about rewarding violations and about sending a message that “anything goes” in the Anacostia Historic District without input from the community.

While the proposed revisions would improve the appearance of what is now there, it ought not to have been there, and the revisions are insufficient to relieve the relentless steel cage effect. *At the very least*, the pairs of narrower steel verticals should be cut out from between the wider “posts” below the clerestory level to evoke a traditional, tripartite storefront division, one that is more open and less forbidding. The cornice should also be lightened.

The staff recommends that the Board not recommend approval of the application as submitted, but that it be revised, minimally with the removal of some of the steel bars, as suggested above.